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Editors' Notes

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Editors' Notes

D'ESTA LOVE AND STUART LOVE

A. M. Hunter in his little book on the Sermon on the Mount entitled *Design for Life* states, "After nineteen hundred years the Sermon on the Mount still haunts men. They may praise it, as Mahatma Gandhi did; or like Nietzsche, they may curse it. They cannot ignore it. Its words are winged words, quick and powerful to rebuke, to challenge, to inspire. And though some turn from it in despair, it continues, like some mighty magnetic mountain, to attract to itself the greatest spirits of our race (many not Christians), so that if some world-wide vote were taken, there is little doubt that men would account it 'the most searching and powerful utterance we possess on what concerns the moral life'."¹

This issue of *Leaven* is devoted to this noteworthy sermon. It grows out of the theme for the 2008 Pepperdine University Bible Lectures. As a matter of custom, the *Leaven* Symposium, a part of the Pepperdine Lectures, carries forward that theme for our readers.

But briefly, what do we have in this sermon found in chapters five, six, and seven of Matthew's Gospel? What we have is the first of five teaching discourses in Matthew—the others being the mission of the disciples (chapter 10), the parables of the kingdom (chapter 13), the life of Jesus' community (chapter 18) and the coming kingdom (chapters 24–25). Further, what we have is nothing less than the basis for the challenge and reward of the life of the disciples as Jesus' alternative community in this world. The import of the sermon is suggested as well by its location on the mountain (5.1–2)—not a hill that serves as a pulpit, but a mountain approximating where the devil took Jesus to show him the kingdoms of the world (4.8), or where Jesus went to pray (14.23), or where he was transfigured before Peter, James and John (17.1–8), or where Jesus commissioned his disciples. The mountain is a sacred place of revelation that recalls the Moses tradition (see Exod 19; Deut 34.1–4).

So, the sermon begins when Jesus sits down (5.2)—the teaching position of both the synagogue (Luke 4) and of the schools.

The Symposium pieces open our issue. The first is JESSICA A. WROBLESKI's exploration of the "peacemakers" as "children of God." Using her own words, peacemaking begins with taking initiatives at a local level. Wrobleski makes three closely related points concerning peacemaking and the church: first, peacemaking is active; second, peacemaking reveals our identity and credibility as disciples of Jesus; and third, prayer has a crucial role in all peacemaking efforts. MICHAEL SWEENEY's mission work among the people of Papua New Guinea taught him how much closer these people were to understanding the cultural and social dynamics at work in the biblical text. He demonstrates this through a Melanesian exposition of the Lord's Prayer. Sweeney states, "As was the case in first-century Palestine, most Melanesian people are collectivistic, honor and shame driven, and take it for granted that there are spirits and invisible forces at work around us at all times. And while such views conflicted with my own Western perspective, I realized that in many cases the people of Papua New Guinea had fewer adjustments to make in understanding the cultural and social dynamics at work in the biblical text than I did. Indeed, I came to see that they had as much to teach me as I had to teach them." MARY ELLEN PEREIRA affirms that even though the Gospel of

1. A. M. Hunter, *Design for Life* (London: SCM Press LTD, 1965), 9.

Matthew is good news, Jesus' message is one that pierces the heart, startles closed eyes and dull ears so that his followers might receive "a rebuke" that moves them "to fruitful repentance and faithful observance of Jesus' teachings." Pereira believes that same gracious message of sharp rebuke needs to be heard as well today. The final Symposium article, by **MARK LOVE**, explores Matthew's hermeneutical theme of mercy alongside the Stone-Campbell tradition of writing scripture on our hearts. His insights are captured best, perhaps, when he states, "we do not simply cut and paste scripture from an ancient context onto our own, but we understand that the power of scripture lies in its ability to speak in a variety of ways into various contexts. Scripture continues to write itself onto our hearts even as we interpret it for new settings. In this sense we are scribes. We allow scripture to be written, or inscribed, onto our lives in an authoritative way." Matthew upholds one of those ways: God desires mercy and not sacrifice.

Other articles round out the issue. **RICHARD DAVID RAMSEY** examines the need for ethics in business to be governed by the message of the Sermon on the Mount, especially in a time when corporate scandals have rocked the business world. Two sermons follow. **GARY SELBY** explores afresh what it means to live simply and not anxiously in the service of Christ. **JERRY TAYLOR** warns us that the houses of our lives need to rest firmly on foundations of rock. Both of these sermons were keynote addresses at the Pepperdine Lectures.

We close the issue with a liturgical piece by **LEE MAGNESS**. The beatitudes frame the basis of his reading. D'Esta and I had our Sunday morning Bible class do a reading of Magness' liturgical piece. Without exception the class members spoke of how the reading enabled them to hear and see Jesus' teachings in a new light. We encourage you to find avenues to utilize Magness' creative work.

Continue to pray for *Leaven*. Future issues include *Micah*, *Theology and Science*, *Restoration Witnesses Worldwide*, *Voices of Young Ministers* and *Theology of Hymns*.

